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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9240
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2152
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5625
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9222
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6800
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4606
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2600
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000443

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: SHAN NATIONALITIES LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY
HOPES FOR THE BEST, PLANS FOR THE WORST

REF: RANGOON 418

Classified By: Political Officer Sean K. O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

1. (C) The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) does not plan to participate in Burma's 2010 parliamentary elections unless its demands calling for the release of all political prisoners and a tripartite dialogue are met. SNLD leaders outlined for us the party's pre- and post-election goals. The SNLD, unlike other prodemocracy organizations and ethnic-minority groups, has a clear post-election plan to keep the party active and relevant -- focusing on rights of ethnic Shan -- even if it means losing its legal status. SNLD leaders met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Nay Pyi Taw and viewed his visit as a success. End Summary.

Chances of Participating in 2010 Election Slim

2. (C) Poloff met with SNLD Secretariat members Sai Soe Aung and Sai Shwe Kyu July 10 to discuss the SNLD's political options for the 2010 parliamentary elections. The SNLD is one of only a handful of legal, registered political opposition parties in Burma (Note: Although the SNLD and National League for Democracy (NLD) share a similar name and political philosophy, they are separate organizations with different leaderships. End note.) Sai Soe Aung said that, as with the NLD, the SNLD will not participate in the 2010 elections unless its two main demands -- the release of all political prisoners (including prominent SNLD leaders) and a tripartite dialogue to include the regime, opposition parties, and ethnic groups -- are met.

3. (C) When asked what steps the SNLD would take should the election law require parties to participate in the election in order to maintain their legal registration, the two SNLD leaders clearly stated the SNLD would disband and focus efforts on promoting ethnic rights. In the end, promoting the rights of ethnic Shan is the ultimate goal, they declared. If the SNLD has to deregister as a political party in order to remain true to those goals, so be it. The SNLD

leaders declined to provide details of how they would promote ethnic rights but stressed the issue is always an important part of their political platform.

Ban Visit Considered a Success

¶4. (C) SNLD leaders, along with approximately 20 other members of "registered" political parties (reftel), met with UNSYG Ban Ki-moon during his July 3-4 visit to Burma. Each group was allotted two minutes of speaking time. Only four groups spoke, including the SNLD which was one of the largest registered political parties present. Despite the short meeting, the SNLD Secretariat members viewed the Ban visit as a success, noting that their party was able to participate in a high-level discussion. Sai Soe Aung said the SNLD saw it as one of their few options to get their points across to senior regime leadership.

¶5. (C) Sai Soe Aung and Sai Shwe Kyu told us the party received word of the meeting through a vague letter from the Special Branch of Police delivered the day before SYG Ban arrived. The letter requested their presence in Nay Pyi Taw for unspecified reasons. Nonetheless, the two SNLD members said there was little confusion as to the purpose of the trip, and they noted wryly that the regime was gracious enough to provide them with a ride to the remote capital and a room at the police "guest house." (Note: NLD Central Executive Committee members have told us they also were notified last minute and were accommodated graciously at the

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police "guest house." End note.)

Comment

¶6. (C) The SNLD leadership seems cognizant that chances are slim for their political demands to be met. The party has put some thought into next steps, including after the election. Unlike NLD counterparts who have not decided what they would do if forced to choose between participating in the election or losing their legal status, the SNLD has come up with a clear position based on their priorities.
DINGER